



Testimony of Bobby Fiandra/ Regal Cinemas in OPPOSITION To House Bill 1238 - Places of Public
Accommodation - Motion Picture Houses – Captioning
Before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
April 5, 2022
POSITION: Oppose

Dear Chairman Smith and members of the committee. My name is Bobby Fiandra, I am a District Manager for Regal Cinemas overseeing operations in Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania. Regal Cinemas operates 13 theatres and 187 screens in Maryland. We respectfully oppose Bill 1238.

As you are aware the pandemic significantly impacted our business. Movie theatres were among the last to reopen. During the twelve months we were closed, our company incurred heavy fixed costs, such as rent and utilities, which dramatically compounded our losses. The effects of the pandemic are still impacting our business today. Audiences of all types, including the deaf and hard of hearing community, have not returned to pre-pandemic levels. As a result, we have found ourselves having to make operational sacrifices including curtailing hours of business.

As a company, serving all audiences is integral to our financial success. We feature a diverse array of film product ranging from blockbuster movies to independent films as well as foreign features. Our intention is to appeal to as wide of an audience as possible and this includes members of the deaf and hard of hearing community.

All of our Maryland sites currently play open caption titles upon advance guest request. We believe that responding to our guests in the market is what allows us to best serve the community and meet business needs. We feel that collaboration rather than legislation is the best approach.

Although we feature open caption shows daily at some of our Maryland locations; the occupancy for these performances has been very low. The majority of our theatre going audience is not interested in performances with subtitles and will typically avoid open captioned performances all together. In many cases, guests request a refund after attending as they find the open captioning to be distracting. Mandating open caption performance counts would have a negative financial impact on our business at a time when we're still recovering from Covid related losses.

In addition to proactively providing open caption performances based on demand, we also offer several technologies along with private rentals to further accommodate our guests. All of our locations are equipped with Assisted Listening headphones to amplify the audio and Closed Captioning devices to allow guests to see captions in their field of view without affecting other moviegoers. Additionally, our Private Watch Party program allows guests, even in small groups, to rent an entire auditorium to watch a movie of their choice.

To summarize, our intention is to enable as many people to patronize our cinemas as possible. It is in our best interest to engage and accommodate our deaf and hard of hearing guests but mandating open captioning across the board will limit flexibility and cause further harm to our recovering business. We ask you for an unfavorable report on HB 1238. Thank you.